

Polit. Pamphlets A 99.

LETTER

TO

Protestant Dissenters

Concerning their

CONDUCT ELECTIONS.

Formerly Published in the Year 1722.

LONDON:

Printed for J. ROBERTS near the *Oxford-Arms*, in
Warwick-lane. MDCCXXXIII.

Price Three Pence.

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LETTER
TO
PROTESTANT DISSENTERS, &c.

GENTLEMEN,



THE Time approaches when by the Laws now in force you will be called to a Work of the greatest Importance both to your selves and others, the choosing Representatives in Parliament.

What relates to your Duty in general, as Subjects to our Gracious Sovereign, as Members of a Community, blest with the most excellent Constitution in the World; the Prudence to be us'd in choosing

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those

those who will faithfully discharge their Trust in the many great and difficult Affairs which must necessarily come before the ensuing Parliament, will, in all likelihood, be plentifully suggested to you by others. What I have to offer to your Consideration shall be wholly confin'd to you as a Body of Men who have a peculiar Call to be watchfull in securing that Liberty in religious Matters, which is so necessary to the flourishing State of Christianity, and to the Repose and Quiet of your Selves and your Brethren.

I do not pretend to any right to dictate to you, the Liberty you have always claim'd to judge for your Selves, being, in my Opinion, inconsistent with any such pretence to Superiority; but as I wish your Prosperity, being myself a Protestant Dissenter, and think maintaining your Liberty is the best Support to true and unfeigned Religion, and the Liberties of your Country, I promise myself you will with Candor weigh what I have to offer to you.

Earl of N.

Your steady Affection to His Majesty's Person, and the *Protestant Succession*, has been owned even by your Enemies; to these you inviolably adher'd when much the greater part of this Nation were run into opposite Schemes. You withstood the Threats and Promises of those who endeavour'd to draw you into the Service of another Master. You were given up, even by your Friends, to make a precarious Alliance, with a single Man, and you submitted with Patience and without Murmuring to the passing of the *Occasional Bill*, being inform'd by those, whose Opinions were of weight at that Time, that it was for the Interest of the *Protestant Succession*, you shou'd then give no obstruction to the passing that severe Law. This you did, tho, it depriv'd your whole Body of a Capacity for Civil Employment, and robb'd several of

of you of Offices of Profit and Trust, some of which were Freeholds. Such an instance of Fidelity, Self-denial, and hazarding every Thing to promote at (that Time) an improbable prospect of our present Happiness, can hardly be parellel'd ! A Whig Majority in the *Court of Aldermen* was preserv'd by two of your Brethren, who contentedly worshipped God in their private Houses till greater Liberty cou'd be obtain'd ; which was likewise the Case of several other Corporations. You had then assurances given you that your Burdens should be taken off, and your Fidelity rewarded as soon as ever it should be in their Power to effect it. The good Providence of God so oder'd it, that your Wishes were crown'd with success, at a Time, when you had (humanly speaking) nothing to expect but Oppression, and the utter extinction of your Liberty, the Laws which were made against you being founded on such Principles as must have ended in your Destruction. The Courage with which you stood in such evil Days, did entitle you not only to Justice, but to Grace and Favour. His Majesty, who never lets faithful Services go unrewarded, was long before his Accession to the Throne, highly satisfy'd with your Fidelity, and resolv'd to shew you he remember'd it. A Prince of Virtue and Honour, will sooner or later recompence faithful Subjects to the full of their Merits. Some false Polititians indeed, may act on the deceitful Principle, that Enemies are to be courted ; and that those that are Friends from Principle will be so still, and that shewing a regard to them, is an incumbrance on the Administration. But a Prince of inviolable Faith and Honour, will listen to no such Counsellors, he will break thro' all Opposition rather than give the least Foundation to Charge him with having forgotten, or neglected those who merited his Favour.

To this tract may now be added this new
reviewed from I. & B. 1711. The
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The two unreasonable Laws against you (as I think the Couduct of the Legislature in Repealing them, as well as the Contents of the Laws themselves, will entitle me to call them) were not Repeal'd till some Years after His Majesty's Accession. This was much wonder'd at by all who knew these Burdens were laid on you as a Punishment for your Fidelity to, and Zeal for his Succession. They are now indeed repeal'd but the Way in which it was done in the Lower-House, shewed, that those who were engag'd in it were sick of the Work, and thought it a troublesome Task. You had indeed their Votes, but what was never seen before in an Affair of that Consequence ; It was carry'd as if nothing was to be offered in Defence of it. You were treated by some flaming Speakers with the utmost Reproach and Contempt, as a Pack of notorious Hypocrites, Republicans, Friends to the late King *James*, Subverters of all Order and Government, and dangerous Enemies of Church and State. Not one of the Courtiers had any thing to offer in your behalf to confute such vile and groundless Aspersions : One of your own Brethren was forced (no Body else appearing an Advocate for you) to wipe off the Reproach. He had indeed on all Occasions shewn the greatest Concern for your Interests, and this was the only Instance One could have wish'd you another Advocate ; since your own, tho' never so just Praises, should not come out of your own Mouths ; but this was your hard Fate at that Time, tho' it would have been no difficult Matter to many of the Establish'd Church who voted for you, and were fully acquainted with your Character and Behaviour (and who knew the Charges against you were false and unjust) to vindicate you.

With this coldness was your Cause, and that of Common Sense and Liberty treated ; I must however, do

do Justice to the Memory of a Noble Patriot in the other House, who bravely and boldly espoused it, who own'd you were entitled in Justice, Gratitude, and good Policy, to the removal of those heavy Burdens. This Great Man could not appear in a Cause when his Heart was not in it. To the Honour of that Great *Earl Stanhope*. Minister, I shall add, that he died last Year universally lamented and belov'd, untainted with the least spot of that fatal Iniquity in which too many were deeply concern'd. I dare say all of you are thankful for the Repeal of those Laws, and have the deepest sense of His Majesty's Goodness to you, and will never make any unsuitable returns, but, on the contrary, will (if that be possible) exert yourselves more than ever in His Service. I know nothing that can be a greater pleasure to an excellent Prince, than to see the Freedom and Happiness of his People fully establish'd; and nothing can be more becoming good Subjects than to promote, to the utmost of their Power, every thing that tends to make a free Nation yet freer, and to remove every thing that is inconsistent with that just Liberty which faithful Subjects to the Civil Power ought to enjoy.

I dare say, none of you repine at the Dignities, Honours, and Revenues annexed to the Clergy of the Established Church; while they are a Support to the Protestant Religion, and act on Protestant Principles, every good Protestant must rejoice in their Prosperity. You can have no other View than supporting the Principles of Liberty, on which the Protestant Religion is founded, and that must always be the best and truest Support of every Protestant Church. If the Principles of a compleat Toleration to all Faithful and Peaceable Subjects, were but once fully asserted, and our Laws agreeable to such generous Principles, it's all that any good Man could either desire or wish for; and it would be ridiculous for any who enjoy that Liberty, to endeavour after

after any greater Privileges or Establishments. But it cannot sit easy on the Mind of any well Wisher to a free Country, to see any Remainders of those Principles in our Laws, which, if pursued, must Countenance, if not justify using the greatest Severities, on a religious Account, towards those against whom there is no Objection, as to their being good Members of Civil Society. I need not labour this Point with those who, I suppose, are convinced that no Civil Restraints ought to be laid on one good Subject more than another ; but that every one, according to his Merit and Usefulness, should be capable of serving his Prince and Country.

Your Brethren in *Ireland*, where the Protestant Cause wants the most Support, are by Law incapacitated from serving their King and Country in an Office, Civil or Military. Frequent Hopes have been given, that this should be redressed ; and one would imagine, the Reasonableness of the Thing was sufficient, without urging any Engagement to see them eased.

The *Arminians* in *Holland*, tho' no Friends to the House of *Orange*, have ever enjoyed all State Preferments, without Distinction.

The *Huguenots* in *France*, tho' but few in Number, and warm Opposers of the Established Church, did enjoy the highest Offices in the State. But tho' the Protestant Dissenters are here put on the same Foot as in the Beginning of the Reign of the late Queen *Anne*, yet the Repeal of the *Occasional Bill* remains as a dead Letter, for no apparent Benefit has accrued to your Brethren thereby and you have Reason to believe, the Neglect and Coolness which has been shewn you, will not be altered but by your Conduct. Tho' you are the principal Part of the Whig Interest in the Kingdom ; tho' you are the chief Support of the Protestant Cause, and the

the grand Bulwark against Popery ; and tho', in many Corporations, you are the best Qualified to be in Office ; yet you are excluded, by the *Corporation Act*, from such Offices, and your Elections are void unless you have been in actual Communion with the established Church within a Year before, whilst it hath been adjudged that you are liable to all burthensom Offices, many of which you have been earnestly sollicited or forc'd to hold ; and the Difficulties of Educating your Children yet remain upon you, School Masters and Tutors being at this Day liable to the severe Penalties of the *Uniformity Act*.

The far greater Part of Protestant Dissenters, think it commendable to shew their Charity to their Brethren of the Establish'd Church, by joining in Communion with them ; but several Bishops, and many pious Men of all Persuasions, have lamented, that the Holy Institutions of our Blessed Lord, should be made Use of in Matters meerly of a Civil Nature. While this continues, there will be Charges of Hipocrisie brought against those who comply, tho' they act with the utmost Sincerity. Good Men can't desire to see unnecessary Terms continued, whilst they judge they tend more to make Men Hipocrites, than to answer the Ends they are pretended for.

I believe you will not think I injure you, in saying you have shewn much more of the Innocence of the Dove, than of the Wisdom of the Serpent, in your Conduct hitherto. It is not only justifiable, but commendable, for every good Man, to embrace all proper Opportunities for promoting the entire Freedom of Conscience. You are as well entitled to have your Liberties and Interests regarded by your Representatives, as others of your Fellow Subjects. You are the Principal Traders in the Kingdom ; a great and considerable Part of the People ; so considerable, that were you to stand

Neuter, the avowed Patrons of Arbitrary Power and Persecution, would triumphantly carry almost all Elections. 'Tis by your Means and Votes, that we have Representatives that will keep any tolerable Measures with a Prince who espouses the Principles of Civil and Religious Liberty. You ought always to choose those to be your Representatives, who are Friends to the Government, founded on Revolution Principles, and who have some Regard to your particular Interests, preferable to those, who, tho' they pretend to be well affected to his Majesty, yet contemn and despise you, and are either your Enemies, or ashamed to be accounted your Friends.

You are at present perfectly disregarded, and no Ways applied to, but as the lowest of the People. You have not sold yourselves and your Country for Bribes, as many Electors have done ; but have honestly given your Votes for those you thought Whigs, and often for such who have shewn no Regard for your Liberties. Some who owe their Elections to you, were warm and Zealous against taking off your Burthens ; others absented themselves, and would not stand the Reproach of appearing for you ; this Reward have you had in many Instances, for your Frankness in giving your Votes and Interest to the first that offered. Were you a little more reserv'd, and did you insist, that those who were to be chosen, chiefly by your Voices, should not only be good Subjects to his Majesty, but Men that would appear in the Cause of Religious Liberty, you would soon have many such offered to you ; but while you are careless of your own Interests, you need not wonder if Statesmen do not much regard them.

I am far from advising you to any unbecoming Behaviour ; but I think you may in Justice, and ought in Prudence, to insist, that those who cannot be chosen without

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without you, should have Qualifications fit to represent yourselves as well as others. If you acted this Part, I can assure you, a just Regard would soon be shewn to you, and your Interests would not long be slighted and neglected. I hope, from what I have said and what may farther occur to you, you will agree with me,

That it is just and Prudent for Protestant Dissenters, to vote against all such as opposed the Repeal of the *Occasional and Schism Acts*; not to vote for such as voluntarily absented themselves when those Acts were repealed, whatever Recommendations they may have: To be cautious and reserved in engaging their Votes and Interests for any, till they are assured the Candidates are in the Interest of Liberty, or till they have advised with their Friends, who will be very ready to inform them of Mens Characters and Actions, and who are fittest to represent them; and till they likewise hear that there are proper Assurances given them, That their Interests shall have a due Regard shewn them.

L O N D O N, January 1, 1721.



